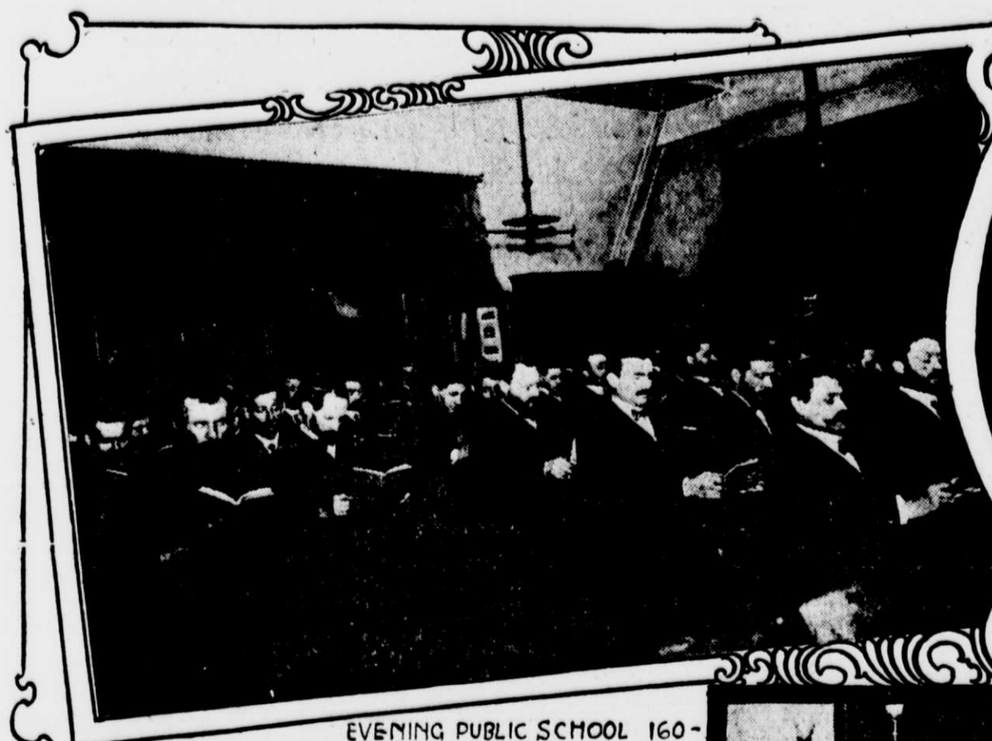
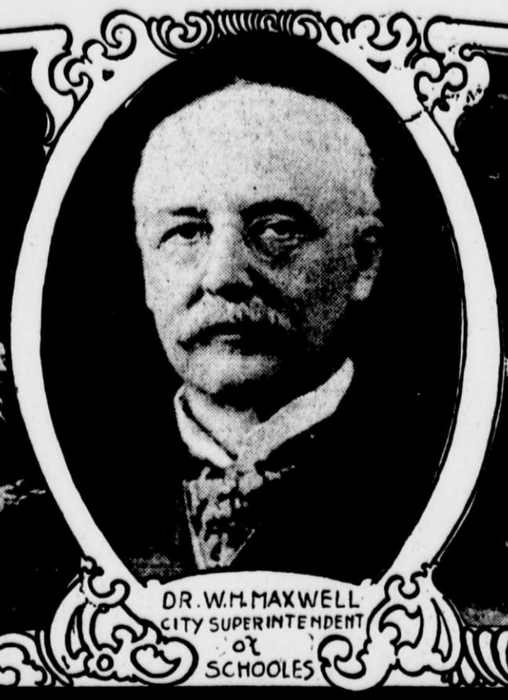
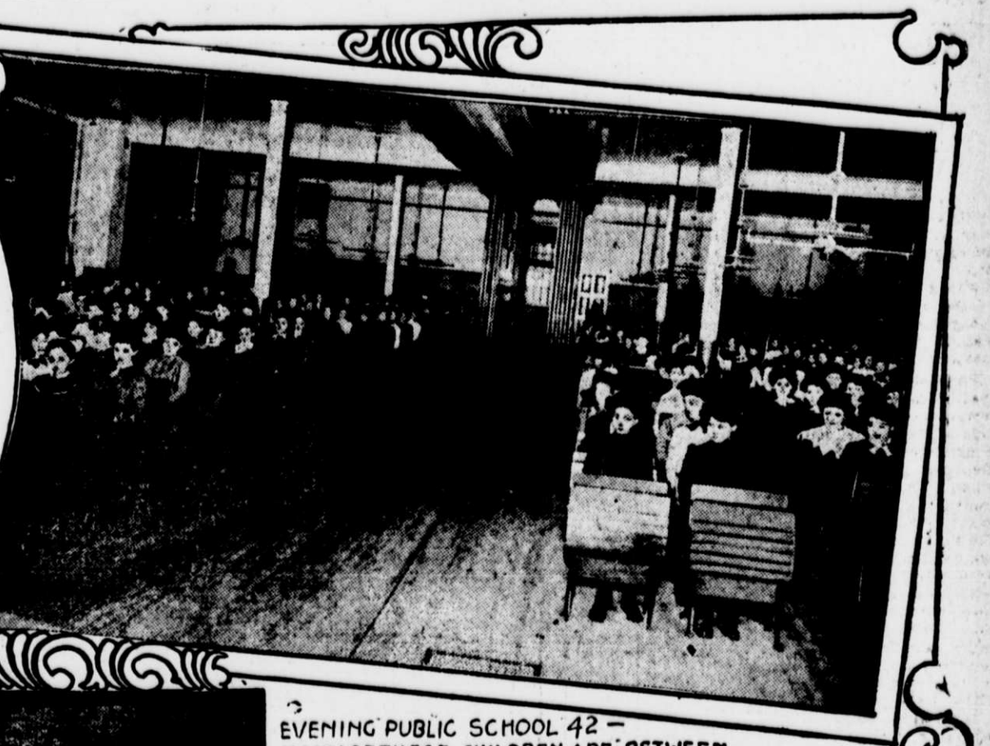
POSSIBLE CHANGES IN THE EVENING SCHOOL SYSTEM



EVENING PUBLIC SCHOOL 160— LEARNING ENGLISH



DR. W. H. MAXWELL CITY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLES



EVENING PUBLIC SCHOOL 42— MANY OF THESE CHILDREN ARE BETWEEN FOURTEEN AND SIXTEEN YEARS OF AGE

CLASS IN EVENING PUBLIC SCHOOL 96

The abolition of the evening elementary schools for boys and girls between 14 and 16 years old and the substitution for them of continuation schools, with hours from 7 to 9 A. M. and from 4 to 6 P. M., was advocated by City Superintendent of Education Maxwell in his annual report to the Board of Education, made on Wednesday. Dr. Maxwell thinks the law which compels boys of the ages named to go to school at night after working hard all day ought to be changed.

The law says that every boy under 16 years of age must be at school and that he cannot go to work unless certain conditions have been fulfilled. If when he has reached the age of 14 he has been graduated from a day elementary school, or gone far enough toward the finish of the fifth school year to pass a reasonably fair examination through the simpler branches, including arithmetic through simple fractions, knows the essential facts of history and has attended day school 130 days during the year preceding his fourteenth birthday and can prove his age by documentary evidence he may then be permitted to go to work. But the law also says he must attend night school when the latter is open. The great difficulty has been to get boys who have left school under the above conditions to return to night school, and the claim is put forward not only by Dr. Maxwell but by those who have had to do especially with this department of education in New York that the boy who has been working eight or ten hours a day—sometimes longer—is not in a fit physical condition to work with his mind for two hours in the evening.

When Dr. Maxwell was asked for an enlargement of his views, he offered a printed copy of his report, and said that it contained a full statement of his ideas on the subject and his reasons therefor. Speaking of the girls and boys between 14 and 16 who are registered at the elementary night schools, he says:

"They do not attend regularly, and they do not derive as much benefit as they need from their studies. The reasons are obvious. On the one hand, they come to evening school tired out with a long, hard day's work. They need to sleep or to play rather than to study. On the other hand, we give them only a diluted form of the day school curriculum. They do not recognize the use of the lessons in reading, history and arithmetic. What the teacher presents is without special interest for them. They approach their studies without energy, and consequently without profit. Under these conditions there need be little wonder that the elementary evening schools are not more successful than they are. The wonder is that the attendance and interest are not worse.

"After observing and studying these schools for thirty years, I am now convinced that the attempt to give instruction in the ordinary elementary branches in the evening to boys and girls from 14 to 16 years of age is a gigantic blunder. Those who are employed during the day need the evening for exercise and recreation. Only those who are endowed with unusual physical strength and unusual mental energy can, after a hard day's work, attend school four evenings a week and benefit thereby. That they need instruction, for their own sakes and for the sake of the community, goes without saying. How and when are they to get it? It has been demonstrated over and over again that they do not get it advantageously when the school time is taken out of their time for recreation—the evening hours."

Dr. Maxwell's idea is that the pupils should get their study hours out of their employers' time and he recommends not only the substitution of a system of continuation schools in place of the evening elementary schools for boys and girls, but that legislation should be sought requiring employers to give to each employee under 19 years of age four or six hours a week for forty weeks each year, and constraining young people under this age to attend such schools regularly. The City Superintendent would have these continuation schools continue, even while the boy or the girl is at work, the education which was broken off at any year below the nineteenth.

"Money is being spent most liberally," continues Dr. Maxwell, "on the education in splendidly equipped high schools of those boys and girls who are so situated that they can make school going the chief business of their lives until they are at least 18 and often much longer. Are the State and the city to take so little interest in the less fortunate, who are in the great majority, that all the education they can offer them is the three R's at the period of the day when the brain refuses, or is too weary, to act? Are employers to have the best of the child's day at toil that is often grinding and poorly remunerative, and leave him little if any chance to cultivate those functions of mind and body upon which success and happiness in after life depend? The interest of the community as well as of the individual demands that the child who has not the opportunity to pursue a high school course, or even to complete the elementary school, shall be kept under the tutelage of the State and shall be given such schooling as he can profit by until the end of the high school age. Employers will in the end profit by the arrangement, because with improved training their youthful employees will become more efficient, and hence more valuable."

Dr. Maxwell's views are shared by those under him who have had anything to do with the supervision of night schools. In his last report District Superintendent Mathew Elgas, who was in charge of evening schools for ten years, mentioned that the number of boys affected by the compulsory education act was 6,178. The average attendance of these lads was 3,294, and it required a great deal of activity on the part of the attendance officers and vigilance on the part of the principals to keep the figures up to that mark. The successor of Mr. Elgas as district superintendent of night schools, Albert Shiels, yesterday gave an idea of the work of the various night schools under his charge, and elaborated the reasons for the substitution of continuation schools for evening elementary schools. And by the way, it was pointed out by everybody who spoke in reference to the matter that it was not the evening elementary schools as a whole that were aimed at by Mr. Maxwell in his report. On the contrary, one found much testimony everywhere as to the excellent work that is being done in these schools for men and women who have just begun to learn the English language, in the way of giving them the first necessary start in the direction of good citizenship.

"The evening school system of the city now includes 103 elementary schools, fifteen high schools and four trade schools," said Mr. Shiels yesterday, "and they cover the ground pretty thoroughly from Tottenville to near Yonkers, and then to the eastward to Far Rockaway.

"In these elementary schools the most important thing done is the teaching of English to foreigners, and this is done not only through the winter but during the summer. This is New York's way of assimilating a population which speaks no English, and which approximates 40,000 persons. They are persons who otherwise would find great difficulty in adjusting themselves. They not only learn English but the method of becoming citizens, the duties of government and the means of adjusting themselves to this country and its requirements.

"The majority of these foreigners who attend night schools to learn English are, of course, Hebrews, and come from eastern and southeastern Europe, but the number from the Orient is noticeable, among them Chinese and Japanese, and there are many from Syria, Armenia and other countries of the Near East.

"Now as to the boys who attend evening school by compulsion; that is to say, who are allowed to work on the condition that they attend evening school, which is the class referred to by Dr. Maxwell. There are hygienic or physiological reason, why no boy should be compelled to work day and night. It is necessary for him to have some recreation. The objection to the measure advocated by the city Superintendent is that it would take time from the employer. Literally this would be true, but in a large sense the employer would reap benefits from the increased efficiency of these boys.

"There is a tendency in the evening elementary schools to give the pupil in place of the ordinary common school studies manual occupations adapted partly to localities. For instance at Tottenville there are large cement works, and the work of the evening schools takes this into consideration. Men employed in the works get opportunities in the night school to qualify themselves for better positions, and I know of instances where this has happened during my experience. One employer raised a man's wages on the spot, in my hearing, when he found that in the evening school he had learned to do more skilful work than that on which he had been employed. Sometimes these courses offered are the basis for a neighborhood or community settlement in various parts of the city. The expense when it comes to teaching sewing or dressmaking or turning out cloth hats is scarcely more than paying for the teaching itself.

"The work of the evening high school is precisely the same as that of the ordinary high school, and there are also courses in designing for the women, in bookbinding and craft work, and stenography and typewriting. It is interesting to note that while the abandonment of the classics in many schools is reported to be on the rebound, the latter is noticeable in our evening high schools, where Latin is still at a low ebb, while Spanish is on the increase. Mathematics maintains its old standard, and mechanical and architectural drawing still have their hold.

"These crafts and continuation schools for the evening high and training schools are along that line, reflect a movement which has had its largest exciting force in Germany, where early was felt the need of giving conscientious, careful teaching and supervision to the worker, whereas this had hitherto been largely a matter of accident or casual opportunity in the shop. In the shop it often happens that a man is in such a position that if he only knew a little more about his trade he could earn from $3 to $5 more a week. But in the shop there is no means of getting this extra knowledge. These night schools of ours are going to give such men the extra knowledge they need, and they do give it already. The membership of our trade schools at night is getting to be composed more largely of men who are actually at work in some occupation, characteristic classes being plumbing, blacksmithing, electrical engineering, electric installation, surveying, cabinet making, carpentry and joinery, machine shop practice and printing. But these things are expensive to teach and that is one handicap. Appliances and materials cost. The taxpayer must understand that extensive trade schools are expensive. The man who is a pupil must find reflected in the school the conditions in his trade. A makeshift equipment will not do.

"With our other trade schools working, we opened our fourth, the Harlem Evening Trade School, on 128th street near Fifth avenue, without giving scarcely any notice, and yet we had 600 applicants for entry at once. The other three evening trade schools in operation are the Stuyvesant, on Fifteenth street near First avenue; the Brooklyn Trade School, and the Long Island, in Long Island City. To these must be added such activities as the craft work for women, which is carried on in many evening schools, but more especially in the Evening High School for Women, at Forty-first street near Third avenue.

"Friday evenings, when the school buildings are not open for regular work, have been seized on for the formation of social and other organizations among the students, the expenses of which are borne by themselves. Here was what was going on Friday evening in the Brooklyn Evening High School on Bergen street, when I visited it a week ago:

"First, the main assembly hall was filled to the gallery with an audience which was listening to a joint debate. There was an excellent orchestra made up of students, which was furnishing the music. Next, the gymnasium was the scene of a basketball match, which was being played by two high school teams. In another room the staff of the Evening High School newspaper was working at full blast—and it is a very creditable paper they get out, too. In another room the Dramatic Art Society was holding a rehearsal. In a fifth room the electrical society was holding a session which packed the chamber. In still another room was going on the most significant performance of all, in my opinion. Pupils were making out applications, to be approved by a teacher, for positions.

"In most evening high schools regular employment bureaus have been established. No student is allowed to apply through them unless his qualifications for a post can be thoroughly guaranteed. On the other hand, the firm employing him must give some sort of guarantee for his future. For instance, a firm wanting a youngster had about fifty questions to ask about an applicant for a job. 'Hold on,' interposed the teacher, 'what you have offered may be a fair wage, but not what the student could get elsewhere in that particular sort of employment,' and the teacher wanted to know more about the job that was offered and what chance for promotion it held.

"What is needed in reference to the evening high school is closer cooperation on the part of employers. They should not only visit the school but they should make suggestions as to how their requirements can best be met. The pay of instructors in the evening schools is low, and the instructors so often go into their own pockets to meet little expenses for materials needed that in some cases the work seems almost a labor of love. The teacher in the elementary school gets $3 a night and in the high and trade schools the pay is $5.

"Of course, the age of the pupils, even in the elementary schools, runs up. For instance, in a school last night I found a woman of sixty-five who was just learning to read and write. Her motive was striking. She had just been done out of some property, she said, and she was determined that she would learn to read and write so that she would run no risks as to the contents of other documents on which she might be asked to make her mark.

"New York is spending a great deal on its evening schools. I should say, offhand, between $700,000 and $800,000 a year. Every person who attends such a school should have some stake in it. There must be some active inducement for him to go there. Often I have seen little boys, tired out with the work of the day, asleep at their desks. Always I have told the teacher to let them sleep. Nature demands it. The child has done all the work he is capable of during the day. Of course, the man who does not read or speak English has the stimulus of getting what he wants at the night school. The workman who is seeking to better his position knows he has a chance of getting the means at the night trade school. But how can you make a boy between 14 and 16, unless he is of exceptional mentality and ambition, feel that he gets something out of going to school to study ordinary English branches after he had finished a hard day's work.

"Much has been made out of the fact that so many of those who start in the evening schools do not continue. Of course New York, more than any other city, is filled with things to divert. We should have the best teachers in the evening schools, but the best asset such schools have is the student who realizes that his attendance means higher wages. The pupil will not of his own accord come to evening school because he realizes that attendance is going to make him a more cultured man. It is a sort of triumphant sense of getting on in the world that he has to realize in order to attend willingly and apply himself.

"Of course our night schools now are, in a sense, continuation schools. It is, I understand, not Dr. Maxwell's idea to have the elementary schools for youngsters abolished until some way is provided of furnishing the facilities they offer in day continuation schools. But speaking of elementary schools, it is almost incredible to notice how quickly new arrivals in this country find their way to them. The other night I came across a man who had landed here for the first time only the day before.

"In the curricula of our trade schools we do not aim to furnish instruction in a trade that does not pay. For instance, the making of artificials is one branch we do not teach. The reason is that the pay is only $5 a week, and the season is short. We do not encourage the learning of any trade where the market price for the labor is so low that it would simply not pay the pupil to receive instruction in it.

"In the Brooklyn Trade School, by arrangement with the Pattern Makers' Union, the latter sends us its apprentices and we instruct them. At graduation the union signs the certificate of efficiency as well as the Board of Education. Some employers have thought that this was equivalent to turning the school over to a labor union, but this was not the case. We should be glad if the employers would manifest the same interest in the pupils and pass upon their work, and consider the latter when it comes to employment."

Henry E. Jenkins, who is district superintendent of a number of schools on the East Side in which evening sessions are held, divided the foreigners who attend the elementary night schools into two classes—those who not only know no English, but are illiterate, and those who have been well educated in their own tongue and have perhaps gone through gymnasia or high schools in Russia or Germany. The other attendance is made up of the boys and girls who come under the law compelling attendance.

"The great difficulty," said Mr. Jenkins yesterday, "has been to force these youngsters into night schools after they have done a hard day's work. I think the tendency, as represented by Dr. Maxwell in his report, is to have, instead of mere elementary night schools for such, continuation schools where boys may not only continue in their book studies but get technical help that would be valuable. In other words, the general tendency in education at the present day is to fit a boy to take a better place in his environment. We should like to make a lessened number in unskilled labor and a larger number in skilled labor. The modern educational ideals recognize that it is not necessary that everybody born shall be a hewer of wood and a drawer of water, even if he does happen to be born that way, but that every one should have the chance at least to make himself a skilled laborer. Educators are trying to inculcate the idea of the nobility of work with the hands. There has been a tendency among parents to keep their offspring from what they call ignoble work and if a father could get a small clerkship for his son he thought he had done well by him and raised him in the social scale. Then with the girls, their parents seem to have preferred that they should go to work in factories or sweatshops or in dry goods stores, where in dull times the chances are that they are never continually employed, to having them taught such things as designing furniture or the domestic arts. There is a continual procession of girls to-day looking for jobs in dry goods stores. The idea is to make education cover more than the purely intellectual side and to make the boy and the girl feel that there is nothing ignoble about honest work of any kind. I think what is wanted is a continuation of vocational work during some part of the day as well as night, as well as intellectual work.

"In London it is very easy to do this. Most of the trades there occupy a particular section of the town, and there are night schools, giving vocational instruction, under the direction of the London County Council. One great distinctive feature of these schools is that pupils must pay a small fee, something like five shillings ($1.25) a term, on the general principle that the pupil must feel that he cannot get something for nothing, and this is said to have a great effect upon the attendance. These are called 'continuation schools.'

"But to return to elementary schools, many of us who have had experience with them feel with Dr. Maxwell that a boy who has worked hard all day is ordinarily in no condition to work an extra two hours over books at night, when he should have a chance for recreation."

The Latest Thing in French Art Is the "Futuriste" Painting

PARIS, Feb. 8.—Without exaggeration it may be said that the most extraordinary exposition of paintings ever seen in Paris or anywhere else opened to-day at the Bernheim Galleries under the designation of "Futuriste Paintings."

Accustomed as we are to eccentric manifestations in art, the present series of canvases from every point of view is the most grotesque, whatever merit there may be in the "futuriste theory" expounded March 8, 1910, in the Chiarella Theatre at Turin and announcedas a revolt against everything already recognized as an established principlein art.

The futuriste does not aspire or pretend to paint anything that stands still. His ambition is to make the picture wiggle-waggle, figuratively speaking. He wants to give an impression of movement—of constant transformation.

Conventional art has established that when a woman sits for her picture she sits still and no academic painter has yet endowed a female portriat with several heads, a multiplicity of arms and countless legs. But "La Modiste," one of the chef d'œuvres of the futuriste exposition, shows a woman with three heads, a large collection of arms and numberless legs. If she was a zigzag puzzle she would not be more sorely in need of being put together, if only the cut up parts matched, which they don't.

Near by hangs a rival picture, a horse, and he is endowed with twenty legs.

THE ADIEUX (CARRA.)

The wretched looking animal might have been a cog wheel if the extra legs lying around his body had been properly adjusted, each hoof answering to a cog. But the trouble with trying to put anything futuriste into order lies in the fact that they are enemies of all established laws of order; so in Russolo's "La Révolte" there are some hundreds of clawing fingers gripping up and down what is either meant to be window panes or ceilings or wall paper or up to date linoleum, for no one can tell just what Russolo wants the guesser to guess those bony ends are clutching after. For all one knows the mixing up of the window panes, wall paper, ceiling and linoleum effect may be symbolic of the plutocrat who can have anything he wants and all he wants, one right after the other.

One must hope that their "good-bys" will never resemble "Les Adieux" by Boccioni. "A kiss at parting," thinks the humble soul, is symbolic of a "good-by," but this promising futuriste Boccioni has emptied what might have been odds and ends from a bankrupt aeroplane factory onto his canvas; there are bits of wheels, bits of wings, and bits of gear and electric globes and air effects swisning about. One wonders what was haunting that good-by. The same painter's "Rire" (laughter), however, would pass muster in the Salon des Independents, though it a little overstocked with detail.

A poor rheumatic man recently declared that in a trip from Paris to Nice he had received 40,000 jolts going over the badly jointed French rails. Just how many jolts the futuriste Carra felt in a French cab he has tried to convey in a painting entitled "Cahots de fiacre" (cab jolts), and they look as an ensemble like the realms of a scavenger with an ugly job on hand, with a hideous ghoul or two thrown in.

THE FUNERAL OF THE ANARCHIST GALLI (BOCCIONI.)

Whatever the dream of disorder an anarchist may have dreamed, "The Funeral of the Anarchist Galli," by Carra, seems even for a priest of disorder a little mixed up, with birds and their feathers thrown in together in a hopeless medley.

Nothing must be painted, pretend the futuristes; only the "atmosphere, the effect," be conveyed. "Space does not exist" is another futuriste credo. Streets are not level planes but sink to the centre of the earth. As a matter of fact nothing exists, all is vibration.

To understand the new beauties of the futuriste picture, one must have a "purified soul."

Alas for the futile hope of finding many "purified souls" among the ultrafashionable, ultra-artistic people who had thronged to see the new paintings all on the qui vive of expectation for an interesting novelty. Nearly every one of the visitors felt that there was something serious the matter with the Parisian soul from a futuriste standpoint. Nor are the most modern modernists yet ready to glorify every form of originality, to sweep away tradition and to consider as a title of honor the appellation of "lunatics" which a crusty old boulevardier applied to the entire futuriste exposition and its admirers.